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**Toward a Central-European Comparative History of  
Philosophy**

**After Chimaerae of National Philosophies – the Hungarian Case\***

**Abstract**

*An important task of a Central-European historian of philosophy was in the last decades to interpret the suddenly reappeared elements of her or his own national culture, including the common key word of these traditions – national philosophy. My paper offers a historical reconstruction of the concept of national philosophy, based on Hungarian examples. In the first part I will outline several contemporary dilemmas about the use of this term. The main part of my paper links this concept with the transformation of the public sphere of the scholars in the age of Kantianism, including Kant's personal reflections, and the narrative of the Hungarian "Debate on Kant". I will try to demonstrate, by the analysis of this debate, that it cannot be interpreted in a plausible form in a European, nor in a national framework, but just as a part of a would-be Central-European comparative history of philosophy.*

**Key words**

Gusztáv Szontagh, József Rozgonyi, reception of Kant in Hungary, national characteristics, national philosophy, *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico*, *philosophia in sensu scholastico*

My approach will concern the intellectual position of a Central-European philosopher after the crucial year 1989. It was an evident task to rebuild our collective identities as political communities; and a philosophical part of this task was a reformulation of the term of political community concerning both our own communities, and the theoretical concept of political community in general. This task was difficult by the following antecedents. A Central-European thinker had to calculate with all the suddenly reactivated elements of the cultural and political heritage of her or his own nation, and to learn and apply them for her or his tradition. Our task was to make a newly formulated synthesis, which must be in accordance with a concept of Europe, which was contested by the pressure of the globalisation on a grade never seen before. In here my paper will concern to the consequences of our situation in the

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July 25–29, 2011; *On the Concept of the National Philosophy*, in the researchers' seminar of the Institute for Philosophical Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, 28 November 2011; and *David Hume in the Hungarian Debate on Kant*, in the conference entitled *Centuries of Hume*, ELTE University, Budapest, September 29–30, 2011. The final version of my article was supported



historiography of philosophy, which is linked with some general questions of the concept of history of philosophy in general. In the following at first I will outline the genesis of the historical concept of the *national philosophy* of the *long 19th century* in general, and in the case of Hungarian philosophy, and that of the prehistory of Hungarian *national philosophy*; which is a characteristic instance in our region. Second part of my article will concern the usage of a historiography based on the concept of *national philosophy* in the contemporary philosophical life, causing a gap between the cultivation of the national philosophical heritages, and the works fitted to the international trends. I will outline the idea of a comparative Central-European history of philosophy in the very end of my lecture, in a relatively new connection with the global-level historiography of philosophy. In these investigations we are searching the following questions: Whether it is possible to write a *complex* history of the Central-European philosophies or an experiment for it must be a *composite* of the main national narratives? By another point of view, our planned historiography can be at least an appendix of the mainstream philosophical ideas, concerning their reception in Central Europe. We can hope that Central Europe as a meeting point of different intellectual influences can offer special mixed ideas for philosophy, which are able to describe by the concept of *creative reception*. These questions are linked with our intellectual and cultural identities, and, I think, we have not answer for them, yet.

### About the concept of national philosophy

In this part of my paper I will outline the appearance of the phenomenon entitled *national philosophy* in the Central-European cultures, mainly based on the achievements of the Hungarian history of ideas. The endeavour of my several recent researches was to create a *great narrative* of the Hungarian philosophy of the *long 19th century*.<sup>1</sup> It was clear that I could not tell the story without a detailed analysis of the 19th-century *national philosophy*, and its survival in the today discourse. For a good analysis of the Hungarian case one must use, or create a universal model of the history of the crucial concept. I have tried to formulate it in my recent researches.

Grounds of the concept of *national philosophy* in today discourse are highly contested. By the classical formulation of the head of the 19th-century Hungarian Hegelianism, János Erdélyi, the problem is clear. The arts, first of all branches of the fictional literature are national; philosophy is universal. (Later, the Marxist canon has inherited and conserved Erdélyi's statement in the 20th century.)<sup>2</sup> In spite of this clear utterance of the universality of philosophy, Central-European Hegelians have formulated different projects of national philosophies in Erdélyi's lifetime. For instance, a Hegelian thinker, Ľudovít Štúr is an inevitable classic of the Slovak national cultural canon, Augustin Smetana has spoken about the new role of the Slavic nations, amongst them the Czech, in the world-history, based on Hegelian patterns of philosophy of history. However, because of the strong and vivid Kantian roots, Hegelianism could never play a similarly dominant role in the Hungarian scenery; we can find hidden elements of a national project in Hungarian Hegelianism, as well. It is symbolical that on the one hand, Erdélyi is the protagonist of the idea of a non-national philosophy; and his most influential work is a (Hegelian) history of the Hungarian philosophy, on the other. (Not the universality of philosophy is problematic, only, in the above mentioned formulation of Erdélyi. One must mention that his statement of the evident nationality of the

literature was published in a time when Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* was well known.)

In spite of this early critique, concept of national philosophy has often emerged as a program in the turning points of the Hungarian history of ideas. However, from the point of view of the academic philosophy it is usually uninteresting phenomenon, regarding its content; its continuous existence in the periphery of the intellectual life refers the hidden patterns of the Hungarian thought. It is a two-faced phenomenon; however, we have a politically incorrect, suspicious concept, avoided by the scholars of the academic life, in concrete situations we give up this carefulness, and use the patterns derived from this officially non-existing concept. A Hungarian philosopher almost never admits the possibility of the national content of philosophy, and has characteristic opinions about the needed trends of our philosophy. She or he neglects the possibility of a national canon of philosophy, and has emotional views about the position of the figures of the past in this non-existing canon. Hungarian scholars of phenomenology and analytic philosophy, communitarian and contractualist political philosophers can unanimously declare the absence of a canonised narrative of Hungarian philosophy, on the one hand. The same persons can produce hysterical reactions about a single reference for the role of Georg Lukács, or that of the philosophers of the inter-war period in the Hungarian culture.

Metaphorically speaking, national philosophy nowadays exists is the Hungarian intellectual life, just like an amputated hand. However, it cannot fulfil the former function of a hand, it can pain in the situations when a hand was needed. By this metaphor, the pain of the amputated hand refers to the hysteria and trouble in our philosophical historiography. We should analyse this *chimaera* of the concept of national philosophy because it is today an *idolum* of our historiographical work. The problem being historiographical, its solution should be a historical reconstruction of the concerned concept, including its former function and content in the first, and its transformation in the last decades of the *long 19th century*.

In here I cannot avoid the reference to the recent monograph on this topic, written by László Percz.<sup>3</sup> Percz, after a modern German parallel of his topic, outlined in the introductory chapter, draws a great and unified narrative of the Hungarian national philosophy. His story begins with the Cartesians,<sup>4</sup> follows

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The need of a *great narrative* has emerged concerning my preparatory works for a new manual of the Hungarian history of literature, in the field of the 19th-century philosophy. By my chronology, starting and ending points of the *long 19th century* in the Hungarian philosophy are 1792 (the beginning of the *Debate on Kant*) and 1911 (death of the biggest figure of the first generation of our neo-Kantianism, Károly Böhm).

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For the Marxist canon of the history of Hungarian philosophy see my recent article: Béla Mester, "A Marxist Canon of the History of Hungarian Philosophy", in: József Jankovics, Judit Nyerges (eds.), *Kultúra, nemzet,*

*identitás*, Nemzetközi Magyarorságtudományi Társaság, Budapest 2011, pp. 48–56. Digital document of the "Hungarian Digital Library" of the Hungarian National Library, retrieved December 31, 2011 from <http://mek.oszk.hu/09300/09396/09396.pdf>.

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László Percz, *Nemzet, filozófia*, "nemzeti filozófia" [Nation, Philosophy, "National Philosophy"], Argumentum Kiadó – Bibó István Szellemi Műhely, Budapest 2008.

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The first printed philosophical work in Hungarian was *Encyclopaedia* of János Apácai Csere (1655, in its frontispiece: 1653), written in Cartesian manner. It is a symbolical starting point of the modernity in Hungarian philosophical historiography.

with the Hungarian debate on Kant,<sup>5</sup> and throws the national romanticism and the trends of the late 19th century ends in the discourse about the Hungarian national character in the inter-war period. The very end of his narrative is the *deconstruction* of the discourse of national character in the political thinking of István Bibó. I have observed two separate stories in the narrative of Percz.<sup>6</sup> The first is the development of the concept of national philosophy in *the long 19th century*. In this time this concept is a legitimate part of the contemporary academic life, discussed by the first-level scholars, on the scenery of the scholar institutions (Academy, universities, academic periodicals). The second story is the development of the discourse about the Hungarian national character in the inter-war period, discussed clearly far from the scholar network of philosophy. An example can clarify the difference of the topics of these epochs. An important work of the discourse about the Hungarian national character was the book of Sándor Karácsony, entitled *Hungarian Way of Thinking*. This fundamental monograph refers to the traditions and the present state of the Hungarian philosophy with a single footnote, only. In his note Karácsony said that there is not Hungarian philosophy, yet, because the system of Károly Böhm is not a Hungarian philosophy. We should know that professor Karácsony was a professor of pedagogy in the University of Debrecen. Here, in the same faculty the professor of philosophy was Béla Tankó, the most faithful disciple of Károly Böhm. Department of philosophy under leadership of Tankó was a basis of the cult of Böhm. Series of doctoral theses were written about the main aspects of the philosophy of Böhm with the name of Tankó as a supervisor. In this intellectual environment it was evident that Böhm is the recent classic of Hungarian philosophy, and a representative of the concept of national philosophy. In the neighbouring department, in the context of the discourse about the Hungarian national character, this tradition has lost its role, and appears in a footnote, only.

Difference between these discourses in their topics, methods and references are clear. The problem is not to demonstrate it, but to find the links between them. We are interested in it, because direct antecedents of the today *chimaera* of the national philosophy, hidden in the historiography, are the attitudes of the discourse of Hungarian national character. My next task is a historical reconstruction of the original concept of the *national philosophy*. In a detailed reconstruction I should link the achievements of the nationalism studies with the whole *corpus* of the historiography of the western thought, and the national-level narratives of Central-European philosophies. In here I can offer a short outline of my conception, only. If we regard the nation as a cultural product, an “imagined community” with its “imagined tradition”, we should analyse the communicational circumstances of this genesis of nations. A historiography of a national philosophy, inserted into the context of nationalism studies, should reconstruct the changes of the public sphere of scholars in the time of rise of the concept of *national philosophy*.<sup>7</sup> By my hypothesis, the change of the structure of this public sphere is the root of the phenomenon of national philosophy. In Central Europe it was in synchrony with the rise of Kantianism. In the following I will mention several reflections of Immanuel Kant to this situation, after that I will analyse the Hungarian situation.

### **Kantian reflections on the transformation of the public sphere**

Discussing the roots of *national philosophy*, at first I will offer an interpretation of some well-known elements of the Kantian theory in the context of the

turn of the public sphere of the academic life. After that I will show their unexpected consequences in the European philosophy in general, and I will quote special instances from our, relative small national philosophical audiences. As it is known, Kant's reflections on the changing structures of the public sphere of the community of philosophers from our point of view contain two main formulations. The first one is the distinction between *philosophia in sensu scholastico* and *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico*, and the second one is the distinction between the private and public usage of one's (human) reason. The first distinction has appeared in several *loci* of the œuvre, essentially in the same form, for instance in his lectures on metaphysics by the version of Pölitz, in his lectures on logic, and in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (in the chapter entitled "The Architectonics of Pure Reason"). However, Kant in these *loci* always talks about the historical determination of *philosophia in sensu scholastico*, and in several places he defines it as a *historical type of knowledge*, in opposite of the philosophy in its strict sense; it is clear that he is conscious of the institutional background. For instance, his formulation of a mere historical knowledge of philosophy presumes an alternative system of institutions for philosophical knowledge, different from the system of schools.

It could be an alternative network of schools for an alternative heritage under condition of pre-modernity; in Kant's lifetime it was possible to offer a radically new system of the production of knowledge, it was the public sphere of thinking. However, Kant always talks about the individuality of the usage of the reason in these *loci*; the thinking has not lost actually its social aspects in Kant's thought. The formulation of the needed form of philosophy – *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico* – refers clearly to this aspect. The end of philosophical thinking is not an individual satisfaction, but the humankind. *Cosmopolis* means: *cosmos* as a *polis*. The importance of this institutional background is clear in his well-known short article, titled "Was ist Aufklärung?" We are interested now in his distinction between the private and public usage of one's (human) reason, formulated in this article written for larger audience than the circle of the scholars of philosophy. It can be regarded as a translation of his ideas about the *philosophia in sensu scholastico* and *cosmopolitico* to the language of everyday life and politics. It concerns the limitation of thinking by the frozen history of ideas; they are *institutions*. Solution of the institutional restriction of the private, individual usage of the reason of individuals is hidden in the community; it is the publicity of thinking, or the liberty of the public usage of the same human reason. (It will be called in the lifetime of the next generations, in the first half of the 19th-century Hungarian philosophical discourse "public philosophy", both as a description of the situation of the contemporary philosophical life, and as a demand of the enlargement of its openness.) In the following we will observe the consequences of this

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The Hungarian "Debate on Kant" (1792–1822) was the first Hungarian philosophical debate in the scenery of the larger public sphere, out of the institutional framework of the universities and colleges. It was the real turning point of the languages: it begins with Latin volumes, and ends with Hungarian articles in scholar periodicals.

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László Percz and I are the fellows of "István Bibó" Intellectual Workshop for the Hungarian history of political ideas. In seminars of

this circle we discussed the conception of Percz in its every phase.

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We should distinguish between the concept of national philosophy and the vocabulary of the introductory chapters of the widespread 18th-century manuals of history of philosophy. They often speak about the wisdom of Egypt, Celtic philosophy, and so on as a part of the past, but they never discussed their contemporaries by the nationality of the authors.



Kantian concept of the publicity of philosophy in the time of the next generations in the national cultures of Europe. We should remember in here Elie Kedourie's heterodox Kant-interpretation in his book *Nationalism*.<sup>8</sup> However, by Kedourie's opinions Kant himself is not a nationalist author, he "has a certain position in the genealogy of the nationalism". Historians of philosophy rarely emphasise that this public sphere has enlarged the importance of national vernaculars in philosophical discourse. In Kant's cultural environment, in German philosophy the importance and the consequences of this change of languages were not clear at the first time because of the highly large German-speaking audience of philosophy. If we remember the history of 18th-century philosophy, we can realise the strange consequences of this linguistic switch and this new structure of public sphere for the great national cultures of Europe, too. In here enough to mention the *bon mots* of the French saloons about the "obscurity" of the German "Geist", or the utterances of some German philosophers about the "emptiness" of the French "Esprit". Later, in a positive, self-reflected manner John Stuart Mill said dark words about the uninformed isolation of the British philosophy of his lifetime. National style, pride and shame in the philosophy; or, independent activity of *disiecta membra* of a European philosophy, been before universal. In a culture of Central Europe the new structure of the public sphere has more clear consequences: discourse on the "great philosophy" and the nation-level discourse about the role of some philosophical elements in national cultures were evidently different.

### **National philosophy based on Kantianism – the Hungarian instance**

Topic of this chapter is an analysis of the most important two works of the first phase of the Hungarian "Debate on Kant" (1792–1822). This first phase (1792–1800) was characterised by its dominantly Latin language, an endeavour for the participation in the European philosophical discourse and it was focused on the Kantian epistemology. (The language of this debate has gradually turned to the Hungarian; and its argumentation has focused mainly on the ethics, from the beginning of the 19th century.) The first phase is divided two parts by the event of the prohibition of the Kantianism in the Habsburg Empire in 1795; both parts are characterised by a Latin book written not for the Hungarians, only, but for the scholar community of Europe. It is an important feature of this period, because of the communicational and language turn from the narrow (but international) scholar discourse to the wider (but national) public sphere, and from Latin to Hungarian in the middle of the "Debate on Kant". The first important philosophical work concerning my topic is the starting point of the "Debate on Kant", József Rozgonyi's *Dubia*.<sup>9</sup> The other one is Joannes Baptista Horváth's *Declaratio*.<sup>10</sup>

Before discussing these anti-Kantian writings, we should make clear that the beginning of the debate on Kant is not identical with the beginning of the Hungarian Kant-reception, in spite of the self-evaluation of the agents of this debate, especially that of Rozgonyi. ("I was the first who has interpreted relevantly the Kantianism in Hungary, and I have falsified it promptly", he said in the end of his career.) The first epoch of Hungarian Kantianism has appeared before this debate and it was the speciality partly of the Lutheran schools in Upper Hungary (*Horné Uhorsko*, today Slovakia), and that of some other institution of the higher education. It was a Kantianism *in sensu scholastico*, without significant original writings, reduced to the curricula of several institutions. (It is the field of research of professor emeritus János Rathmann, in

Budapest. He has recently found some interesting, remarkable Kantian writings of the German-speaking Lutheran culture of Upper Hungary written by his hero; Samuel Toperczer from *Zips / Spiš*, but they remained in manuscript.) Our anti-Kantian books can be regarded as an answer of the silent, but – for the contemporaries – palpable early-Kantian climate of the intellectual circles at least in Upper Hungary. (However, the books were published in Buda and Pest, their authors were connected with this region. Rozgonyi was a schoolmaster in a town of this part of the country, and Horváth, with the others of the same age, in his soul remained a professor of *Universitas Tyrnaviensis*, however, it moved to Buda; and later to Pest in the last period of his active career.) An important event was in these years the official prohibition of Kantianism in the Catholic institutions, and a remarkable pressure on the Protestant ones by the same reason, and the official procedures against the Kantian professors in the University of Pest, and in the Academy of Pécs. After these events, being a professor of a university, which was used scenery of these processes, writing an anti-Kantian book is not the same “writing act” that doing the same, before the prohibition, with another institutional background.

We should begin with the book published later, that of Joannes Baptista Horváth. Actually, it is the last writing of the author, a professor emeritus of the University of Pest, two years before his death. He has finished his metaphysical masterpiece, and published his argumentation against Kant as a supplement of this work, as his last words. Actually, it is just his formal declaration. His metaphysics was published as early as 1767. He categorised his Kant-criticism written thirty years later, as a supplement of a metaphysical compendium of the very pre-Kantian epoch. This “writing act” hardly could interpreted by other form, that a declaration of the truth of the ancient metaphysics in comparison with the novelty of Kant. Horváth’s argumentation has not appeared in a politically empty space; we are just after the prohibition of Kant, and some of his close colleagues at the university have recently lost their professorships because of their Kantianism. Horváth had a special, double intellectual background. On the one hand, he was a requisite of the Jesuit traditions of the university, being a typical representative of the Jesuit Enlightenment especially in his natural philosophy. He recognised all the results of the modern sciences, amongst them the physics of Newton, and avoided the considerations on their possible metaphysical consequences. On the other hand, he was a correspondent member of the Academy of Sciences of Göttingen, probably by his merits as a writer of physical textbooks. The endeavour of the contemporary intellectual circles of Göttingen was to form a new-type international network of scientists, and Horváth evaluated his utterance about the Kantian philosophy as a member of this new European network. Horváth has marked his academic membership in Göttingen on the frontispiece of *this* book, only, because of its partly international target audience. A short com-

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Elie Kedouri, *Nationalism*, 6th edition, Blackwell, Oxford 1996.

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Jos. Rozgonyi, *Dvbia de initis transcendentalis idealismi Kantiani. Ad Viros Clarissimos Jacob et Reinhold*, Typis Mathiae Trattner, Pestini 1792.

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Joannes Baptista Horváth, *Declaratio infirmitatis fundamentorum operis Kantiani Cri-*

*tik der reinen Vernunft*, Abbate B. M. V. de Egres, Reg. Scient. Societatis Götting. Membro corresp. olim in Regia Scient. Universitate Hungariae variarum scientiarum professore publico (in supplementum metaphysicæ suæ elaborata), Typis Regiæ Universitatis Pestiensis, Budæ 1797. (Within the *antiquas* of the Latin frontispiece the title of Kant’s work is written by German *Frakturschrift*.)

pendium of his criticism of critical philosophy, emerged from these elements of his background is a sophisticated, but correct analysis of Kantianism by the old terminology and system of ideas of an old-fashioned scholasticism, spread in a new network. The title expresses the author's world-view and attitude: *Declaratio infirmitatis* etc. Horváth, as a professor and as a correspondent member of the Academy of Sciences of Göttingen, thinks himself authorised to *declare the truth* about Kant's new philosophy. It is a symbolic appearance of the two worlds is the typographical texture of the pages of his book. In a contemporary German philosophical book the lines written by *Frakturschrift* surround some ancient Latin scholar terms, written by *humanistic antiqua*. In order of the development of the German terminology, Latin words and their *humanistic antiquas* have evaporated in the German forest. Concerning Horváth's book, the Old Latin terminology and their letter-types form the texture, and in it the German words of Kant are only groves for cut out by the axe of the orthodox scholastic philosophy. By Horváth's invention, every successful argumentation is an elimination of a new German term. However, Horváth had the stronger institutional background, he could not manage his book effectively, because his age. In spite of his international relationship and high intellectual respect in his country, his book could not be play as great role in the Hungarian Kant-debate as its merits could motivate, at least amongst the Catholic critics of Kant. May be this relative marginal position of professor Horváth's book is a reason that the communicational centre of the Kant-debate was far from the university of Pest, and it became the first Hungarian philosophical debate on the scenery of the public sphere.

For a more influenced figure of the same debate we should turn to another part of the contemporary Hungarian intellectual scenery that of the Calvinist cultural network, and within it József Rozgonyi, with his different attitude, expressed in the title of his book, *Dubia de initiis* etc. Seemingly, Rozgonyi's book is the first work of a young philosopher at the beginning of his career, without any significant institutional background. In this time he was the schoolmaster of a newly established, small Calvinist secondary school of Losonc (Lučenec, Slovakia). This little town had a remarkable importance for a few years in the Hungarian intellectual life. After the reorganisation of the nation-level structure of the Hungarian Protestants, a pastor of Losonc was elected for the position of Calvinist bishop of Central Hungary, and his seat was in this town for a while. The editor of an influential periodical of Hungarian sentimentalism was a literary gentleman from Losonc. The foundation of the new Calvinist school in the seat-town of the bishop was an effect of this provisory central position. It is interesting that Rozgonyi promptly has found sponsors for publishing his first book in a first-rank editing house in Pest, Mathias Trattner. (As an elderly professor, remembering the beginnings of his career, he characterised himself "a young schoolmaster of a little and new school in a little town". Later, as a respected professor of a much more prestigious college, that of Sárospatak, he could have published his books only after the reorganisation of the press of the college by himself.) Who was this author and what was his position in the early 19th-century Hungarian philosophy and in philosophical historiography later, and today?

József Rozgonyi (1756–1823) was the greatest character of the Hungarian debate on the Kantian philosophy, on the part of the anti-Kantians. His philosophical position, and his criticism on the Kantianism based on this position, is unique in his time. His philosophical background was not usual in Central Europe in his time. He was graduated at the University of Utrecht, where he was a disciple of professor Hennert. In his years in Utrecht, under the influ-



ence of his professor, he became a follower of the Scottish *common sense*-philosophy; his favourites were mainly Thomas Reid and James Beattie. After his studies in London, and Oxford, he became familiar with the Kantian philosophy during his journey home, at German universities, Jena and Halle, where he frequented Reinhold's and Jacob's lectures on the Kantianism. In these years he was a thinker with established system of ideas, in an age elder by some years than his professors. Consequently, he did not change his mind influenced by his German professors, the result was something other: Kantianism of his professors provoked him to write a criticism on the Kantian philosophy based on his earlier philosophical opinions, connected with the Scottish *common sense*-philosophy. His work, entitled *Dubia*, was written in Latin, published in Hungary, but by its aims it was a work dedicated to Reinhold and Jacob on its frontispiece, and addressed to the philosophers of the world, at least of Europe. Target audience of Rozgonyi's other Latin works is the same: the European philosophers. We can find his titles in the online catalogues of the libraries of the greatest universities of the Continental Europe, and some positive reviews on the pages of *Gelehrte Anzeigen* in Göttingen. Rozgonyi's book is based on the first and second critical work of Kant, without knowing his aesthetics, by chronological reasons.<sup>11</sup> The main chain of his argumentation is the following. At first, he recognises the importance of Kant, saying that he marks similar turn in philosophy like Newton in mathematics, at least in the Continental thinking. Rozgonyi's interpretation follows a reductive method. Central concept of the Kantian philosophy, i.e. *causality*, can be simply reduced to the Humeian theory of causality. The problem is that in this process of the Continental import of Hume the original Scottish context of the Humeian philosophy with the set of problems of Hume's contemporaries, and his critics remained unknown. Rozgonyi's opinion implies that this reduced Continental adaptation of the Scottish tradition by Kant is a misinterpretation of this philosophical tradition. (Rozgonyi spoke always about the Scottish, and not British or English philosophy.) An important endeavour of his work is to inform his Continental – mainly German and Hungarian – target audiences about this Scottish philosophy, probably unknown for them, with a provocative manner. The motto of the book is James Beattie's definition of the *sound reasoning* in English (it is the only non-Latinised reference of the volume). Later, he often adds the right pronunciation of the names of his favourite Scotsmen. The epitome of his argumentation that Thomas Reid's critique on Hume is right and it is valid for Kant, whose ideas can be reduced to that of Hume. This unique point of view, rooted in his special intellectual background is Rozgonyi's importance in the European history of philosophy. After this polemical work, his later Latin books represent the same opinions, and were enough to try find an anti-Kantian ally in the person of Ernst Schulze in Göttingen.

His writings in Hungarian – mainly a few of short pamphlets – represent another register: he wrote it for the people, who do not read, or do not read in the needed level in Latin. (The most interesting amongst them, *The Priest and the Doctor around the Dying Kant* by its philosophical content is just a short, popularised, and actualised version of his *Dubia*.)<sup>12</sup> From this functionally

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However, the book was published in 1792, its preface is dated to 1791. The main part of the text was probably finished in 1790, or 1789, before the publication of the aesthetics of Kant.

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[József Rozgonyi], *A' pap és a' doctor a' sinlödő Kant körül, vagy rövid vizsgálása, főképen a' Tiszt. Pucz Antal Úr' Elméltkedéseinek: A' Kant' Philosophiájának fő Resultátumairól, 's öldalslag illetése az erköltsi Catéchismust Író' Bétsi feleleteinek*, [Pest] 1819.

bilingual communication followed a possibility of a false interpretation in our national narrative. In the history of Hungarian philosophy, professor Rozgonyi is the “bad guy”, a protagonist of the conservatives, who has a debate against the Kantianism, “the incarnated Enlightenment”. His opponents, who wrote in Hungarian, without any reception abroad, are counted Europééres – of our national canon. It is clear, that the problem is hidden in the structure of the national canon, which is unable to describe the composite structure of the European network of philosophy.

In the following I will outline the interesting reception of Rozgonyi’s thought, from the early reflection to his first book throw the first canon of the Hungarian philosophy to the contemporary interpretations. The first reflection to Rozgonyi’s book was an enthusiastic Kantian attack in a newly established Lutheran–Calvinist review.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, this article is an evidence for the Hungarian Kantianism existing before Rozgonyi’s criticism; on the other, it is interesting because its interpretation by Rozgonyi. By his expression, the article was appeared after Reinhold’s and Jacob’s silence, “*quasi e machina Aretologus quiddam*” (like an *ex machina* Aretologus). *Aretologus* was the name of the professional intellectual bootlicker who eloquently has enumerated the ‘*aretēs*’ (virtues) of the host in a late antique symposium. Rozgonyi has supposed that the anonymous author of this article was an intellectual vassal, or disciple of Reinhold.<sup>14</sup> By the evidence of Rozgonyi’s view we can say that his endeavour was to provoke an international debate, and he evaluated the first reaction in this frame. Kantian debate has been a Hungarian affair, focused on the ethics, in the second and third decades of the next century, only, in an intellectually New World. The mainstream image of Rozgonyi, as a member of this local discourse on the opposite part of progression has established as early as 1835, with the first historiography of Hungarian philosophy written by Pál Almási Balogh.<sup>15</sup> However, Almási was personally a disciple of Rozgonyi, and by the evidence of his works and manuscripts he knew well enough the favourites of his professor,<sup>16</sup> he interpreted Rozgonyi’s works as the parts of the Hungarian Kant-reception, only. The other possibility was that of the reception of the Scottish philosophy, or as a participant of an international discussion. Since this time we have read Rozgonyi’s work from the point of view of the elaborated Kantianism, in which any elements of the pre-Kantian philosophy has not importance. Nowadays, with the new researches of the Continental reception of Hume and the Scottish tradition has emerged a new evaluation of Rozgonyi amongst others. The first remarkable article has positioned Rozgonyi’s œuvre in the reception of Hume, with several mistakes.<sup>17</sup> There was changed the names of Georg Jacobi, the brother of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Ludwig Heinrich Jakob (by the orthography of Rozgonyi: Jacob), and disregarded Reinhold. Based on this mistake, Rozgonyi was discussed as a disciple of anti-Kantian German professors and their follower in his criticism on Kant. (Actually, he wrote his book *against* his Kantian professors.) Later, Rozgonyi was regarded a follower of Hume, and his sympathies for Reid were discussed marginally. Another publication is the Hungarian translation of an extract from his work in a representative series of Hungarian cultural heritage.<sup>18</sup> It is a big step for the canonisation of Rozgonyi, with some remarkable mistakes in the philological apparatus. In here the difference between the figures of the Scottish thought, e.g. Hume and Reid is eliminated, and Rozgonyi is regarded as an author of a single book, with a large intellectual legacy in manuscripts. (Actually, we have the complete œuvre of Rozgonyi in all the significant Hungarian libraries, and we have not any manuscript.)

As a conclusion of this part, we can derive from the attitude of the mainstream historiography and from the mistakes of the new approaches the following methodological experience. We should not regard an *œuvre*, or a book a part of the *same* discourse, only. An interpretation with a “progressist” approach cannot recognise the pre-Kantian elements of philosophy of the early critics of Kant. An analysis with a point of view of the reception of German philosophy in Hungary disregards that of the Scottish one, and *vice versa*; and the national canon is blind for the difficulties of the different lines of reception. Our aim should be a methodology of the philosophical historiography, which can regard the different lines of the European tradition and the national discourse *in the same* analysis. Its framework should be a *comparative Central-European history of philosophy*.

In the Hungarian case of the transformation of the public sphere of scholars we could observe a proto-concept of the national philosophy. It is incarnated in the nation-level philosophical discourse, determined by the local vernacular, without any prescription for the content of this discourse. The instances were the representatives of an old-fashioned, Latin inter-nationality, in the New World of national discourse. Philosophical historiography often evaluates the story of transformation from a point of view, which is not free from the consequences of the project of national philosophy. By other words, we have seen the prehistory, and post-history of the national philosophy; we should look the cores. They are incarnated in the history of the concept of national philosophy, from the post-Kantian epoch to the decline of the original project.

### **Blossom and decline of the national philosophy – from the national romanticism to the national characteristics**

Task of the age of national romanticism was to develop in details the new structure of the public sphere, which was ready in a nutshell in the last period of the debate on Kant. In this time it was equivalent with the institutional background of the press of scholars in native vernacular. The project achieved its whole complexity in the end of the thirties of the 19th century, by the con-

13

For Rozgonyi's late answer, with data of the review see: [Jos. Rozgonyi], *Responsio ad immodestī anonymi recensentis, crises, contra Dubia de initiis transcendentalis idealismi Kantiani. Allatas, et vol. I. Annal. Ecclesiasticorum anni 1793. insertas. Per auctorem Dubiarum de initiis transcendentalis idealismi, S. Patakini* 1816.

14

Reinhold regularly had students from Hungary. For instance, Samuel Toperczer in 1792 has graduated in Jena with a thesis about the Kantian philosophy, and his supervisor was Reinhold.

15

Pál Almási Balogh, “Felelete”, *Philosophiai pályamunkák* (1/1835), pp. XI–XVI, 1–211. This writing was a winner of the usual competitions, organised by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in the field of philosophy.

16

Rozgonyi's lectures have survived written by the hand of Almási Balogh, in his student years.

17

Pál Ács, “‘Ignoramus’. David Hume's Ideas in the Hungarian Enlightenment”, in: Peter Jones (ed.), *The Reception of David Hume in Europe*, Thoemmes Continuum, London 2005, pp. 253–267.

18

For a Hungarian version of a short fragment of Rozgonyi's book in the translation and with the notes of László Havas see Gábor Tüskés (ed.), *Magyarországi gondolkodók. 18. század. Bölcsészettudományok*, Vol. I, Kortárs Könyvkiadó, Budapest 2010, pp. 153–156, 853–857.

tinuous sponsorship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (since 1825). The top of this well-structured public sphere was the field of criticism in every serious periodical, and in a separate review, established after the model of *Edinburgh Review*. When this vivid cultural life in national language has found its philosophical self-reflection, emerged from the papers of professional critics, concept of *national philosophy* was born soon.

Early 19th-century Hungarian criticism of contemporary philosophy had several patterns about the concept of an “adult and healthy” culture, and the role of philosophy in it. The first influence was the Herderian concept of culture. In Hungarian discourse it appeared in form of long debates about the present status of different literary genres in Hungarian cultural life. Their interpretative framework was clear: an “adult and healthy” national culture should have large literature of epics, novels, and plays, etc. If one of them absent, or too weak, it must be retrieved. Philosophical criticism has applied this attitude, and transformed it to the need of an *original philosophical system* in an “adult and healthy” national culture. Another pattern was the turn of the Kantian slogan of the Enlightenment, “*Sapere aude*”, from the individuals’ reason to the national culture. Intellectual autonomy of humans has been cultural autonomy of the nation.

Hungarian critics had a philosophical program; they regarded their role as a theoretical regulator of the national culture “in life and in literature”.<sup>19</sup> The road from the individual criticisms of works of the national philosophical life to the general formulation of the concept of national philosophy was surprisingly short. Crucial paragraphs of the first manifesto of a “Hungarian philosophy” are identical with the parts of the former criticisms of the author.<sup>20</sup> However, these general statements about the needed content of the Hungarian philosophy of the future, fitted into a European philosophical spectrum, are big steps for a substantive concept of national philosophy; this manifesto contains a tension between substantiality and functionality of the national philosophy. Szontagh has never gave up his original program of 1827, just transformed it to a need of a political philosophy, which able to analyse the political life of Hungary.<sup>21</sup> Formulation of the concept of national philosophy was a prerequisite of a political philosophy for him; consequently it could never been completely substantive on his hands. Dilemmas about the content and function of the national philosophy were in the clearest form formulated in an assembly of the Department of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in the summer of 1847. Keynote speaker of the assembly has outlined a network of concepts rooted in Kantian ideas. Top and bottom of this four-strata-system are identical with Kantian terms: ‘school philosophy’ (*philosophia in sensu scholastico*), and ‘world philosophy’ (*philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico*). The second level of the system, entitled ‘individual philosophy’ refers to smaller philosophical “writing acts”, to everything, which is more than teaching or learning philosophy, following the curricula of schools. We are interesting in here in the third level, entitled ‘national philosophy’. Surprisingly, its formulation is far from any substantial content. It is not a special “Hungarian way of thinking”, but a theoretical analysis of the life of the Hungarian nation especially as a political community. By other words, the terms of ‘national philosophy’ in this time referred to political philosophy (applied for the analysis of political life of a concrete political community).

This formulation is a snapshot about a moment of the position of the philosophy in the national culture. A few years later the term of ‘national philosophy’ departed from the political philosophy, and became more and more substan-

tial. In here it is enough to mention the intellectual dilemmas of two important philosophers of the end of the *long 19th century* of Hungarian philosophy. For Bernát Alexander, the father of the scholar translation of philosophical classics in Hungary, the concept of national philosophy has appeared as an interiorised political and cultural demand. His inauguration lecture in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1896, with the topic of “national spirit in philosophy” is a document of a hopeless intellectual debate between his personal cultural patriotism and his opinions as a scholar of history of philosophy. Another important figure of the same generation, Károly Böhm has chosen another escape from the same dilemma. Preface of his most important book is dated to 15 March (anniversary of the revolution of 1848), and refers to the present constitutional crisis of Hungary (1906). In this pages professor Böhm speaks as a citizen and patriot. This volume contains an epitome of a never detailed political philosophy of his philosophical system. In this chapter he never refers Hungarian works and events, and as a part of the demonstration of his extreme individualism, he emphasise that *nation, society and church* have instrumental values, only.

We have achieved the last philosophically interesting epoch of the history of the national philosophy. After the age of Alexander and Böhm has begun the epoch of the discourse of Hungarian national character, with a central topic of “Hungarian way of thinking” – out of the Hungarian and European philosophical traditions. It could be plausible in the inter-war period because of the demonstrated implausibility of the discourse of national philosophy, and the absence of political philosophy. However, it was born from this twin absences, it could not replace them. A few decades later, after the demonstrated implausibility of the discourse of national characters, we have a discourse full of the requisites of the conceptual frameworks of the past, without their historical reconstruction. My task was to make some steps for this reconstruction.

## Conclusion

Initial problem of my paper concerned our task as historians of philosophy in Central Europe in the last two decades. In this time, forgotten elements of the national cultural canons suddenly reappeared. In this process a key word was the ‘national philosophy’. Above I have offered a historical reconstruction of this concept, based on Hungarian instances of history of philosophy. By my thesis, ‘national philosophy’ has emerged with a theoretical reflection to an existing philosophical life in native vernacular, and its original meaning was close to an applied political philosophy. From this chain of idea follows that today *chimaerae* of national philosophy can disappear caused by a plausible political philosophy, only, used in the same national culture.

19

For a manifesto of this endeavour see Tuskó Simplicius [Gusztáv Szontagh], “A literatúrai kritikás folyóírásokról [On the Reviews of Literary Criticism]”, in: István Juhász (ed.), *Tudományos Gyűjtemény (1817–1841)*, Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest 1985, Vol. 1, pp. 275–289. Originally published in 1827.

20

Gusztáv Szontagh, *Propylaeumok a' magyar philosophiához* [Propylaea for a Hungarian Philosophy], A' Magyar Kir. Egyetem' betűivel,

Buda 1839. In his preface Szontagh speaks about the use of the fragments of his recent articles, and decodes his former pennames, for avoiding the charge of plagiarism.

21

For his political philosophy see: Gusztáv Szontagh, *Propylaeumok a társasági philosophiához, tekintettel hazánk viszonyaira* [Propylaea for a Social Philosophy, with a Regard to the Conditions of Our Country], Emich Gusztáv, Budán 1843.



We have found problems of philosophical historiography, caused by the *chimaera* of national philosophy, discussing our historical examples. We have seen that it is impossible to offer a plausible description of the phenomena of the proto-concept of national philosophy, based on a post-concept of national philosophy. In the quoted case the plausible interpretation of the important parts of the Hungarian debate on Kant (1772–1822) was impossible both in a national, and in a universal framework. By a historiographical conclusion it is an indirect evidence for the need of a *comparative Central-European historiography of philosophy*, as a new field of research.

**Béla Mester**

### **Prema srednjoeuropskoj komparativnoj povijesti filozofije**

#### **Nakon himera nacionalnih filozofija – slučaj Mađarske**

##### **Sažetak**

*Važna zadaća srednjoeuropskog povjesničara ili povjesničarke filozofije posljednjih desetljeća bila je interpretacija iznenada ponovno pojavljujućih elemenata njene ili njegove nacionalne kulture, uključujući i zajedničku ključnu riječ ovih tradicija – nacionalnu filozofiju. Moj rad nudi povijesnu rekonstrukciju pojma nacionalne filozofije na temelju mađarskih primjera. U prvome dijelu opisat ću nekoliko suvremenih dilema o upotrebi toga pojma. Glavni dio rada povezuje ovaj pojam s transformacijom javne sfere znanstvenika u kantijanskom razdoblju, uključujući Kantova osobna razmišljanja, kao i narativ mađarske »Rasprave o Kantu«. Analizom ove rasprave nastojat ću pokazati da se taj pojam ne može u plauzibilnom obliku interpretirati niti u europskom niti u nacionalnom okviru, nego samo kao dio jedne moguće srednjoeuropske komparativne povijesti filozofije.*

##### **Ključne riječi**

Gusztáv Szontagh, József Rozgonyi, recepcija Kanta u Mađarskoj, nacionalna obilježja, nacionalna filozofija, *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico*, *philosophia in sensu scholastico*

**Béla Mester**

### **In Richtung der zentraleuropäischen vergleichenden Philosophiegeschichte**

#### **Nach den Schimären nationaler Philosophien – der Fall Ungarn**

##### **Zusammenfassung**

*Die bedeutungsvolle Mission des zentraleuropäischen Philosophiehistorikers oder der – historikerin in den vergangenen Dezennien hieß, die jährlings wiederkehrenden Elemente seiner bzw. ihrer eigenen Nationalkultur zu explizieren, unter Einschluss des gemeinsamen Schlüsselwortes dieser Traditionen – der nationalen Philosophie. Meine Arbeit bietet eine historische Rekonstruktion der Notion der nationalen Philosophie auf der Grundlage der ungarischen Beispiele. Im Anfangsteil umreißt ich etliche gegenwärtige Dilemmas über den Gebrauch des angeschnittenen Begriffs. Der Hauptteil meines Papers verknüpft diesen Begriff mit der Umwandlung der öffentlichen Sphäre der Gelehrten zu Zeiten des Kantianismus, samt Kants persönlichen Überlegungen, wie auch dem Narrativ der ungarischen „Debatte über Kant“. Anhand der Analyse dieser Debatte versuche ich auszumalen, der Begriff lasse sich weder im europäischen noch im nationalen Milieu plausibel interpretieren, sondern ausschließlich als Baustein einer denkbaren zentraleuropäischen vergleichenden Philosophiegeschichte.*

##### **Schlüsselwörter**

Gusztáv Szontagh, József Rozgonyi, Rezeption Kants in Ungarn, nationale Eigenschaften, nationale Philosophie, *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico*, *philosophia in sensu scholastico*

**Béla Mester**

**Vers une histoire comparative de la philosophie d'Europe centrale**

**Après les chimères des philosophies nationales : le cas hongrois**

**Résumé**

*Une tâche importante pour un historien ou une historienne de la philosophie d'Europe centrale a été, ces dernières décennies, d'interpréter les éléments de sa propre culture nationale soudainement réapparus, y compris le mot-clé commun de ces traditions : la philosophie nationale. Mon article propose une reconstruction historique du concept de philosophie nationale, fondée sur des exemples hongrois. Dans la première partie, je ferai un aperçu de plusieurs dilemmes contemporains quant à l'emploi de ce terme. La partie principale de mon article relie ce concept à la transformation de la sphère publique des chercheurs à l'époque kantienne, y compris les réflexions personnelles de Kant, ainsi que le récit hongrois du « Débat sur Kant ». En analysant ce débat, j'essaierai de démontrer que ce concept ne peut être interprété sous une forme plausible dans un cadre européen ni dans un cadre national, mais seulement comme partie d'une éventuelle histoire comparative de la philosophie d'Europe centrale.*

**Mots-clés**

Gusztáv Szontagh, József Rozgonyi, réception de Kant en Hongrie, caractéristiques nationales, philosophie nationale, *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico*, *philosophia in sensu scholastico*